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AUTHOR Juul, Thomas Patrick
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ABSTRACT

This paper presents findings of a study that examined the results of tenure and legal protection on lesbian, gay male, and bisexual public school teachers. Specifically, it describes the effect of tenure, state laws, inclusive contracts, and local ordinances on the openness and public identities of gay teachers. A total of 904 out of 1,400 lesbian, homosexual male, and bisexual teachers completed a survey. Of these, 611 were contacted through lesbian and gay teacher organizations and 289 acquaintances were contacted through the members of these organizations. Findings indicate that tenure had a strong negative influence on issues related to job satisfaction. Tenure did not appear to provide protection or an avenue to openness about the respondents' sexual preference. The data raised two further questions: (1) Why did tenure fail to provide the expected increase in teacher openness about their sexual identities? and (2) Why were respondents largely uninformed about their civil rights? To answer these questions, 11 respondents, none of whom were explicitly "out" in their schools, were contacted for follow-up interviews. They reported that they were not open about their sexual identities because of the fear of professional, social, and physical reprisals. In conclusion, homophobia drives many qualified and talented teachers away from teaching. Those who stay must constantly attend to the prospect of exposure with all its consequences. The wider implication is that any teacher, straight or gay, who holds and expresses unpopular views may experience fear and isolation. Fourteen tables and an appendix containing 27 interview narratives are included. (LMI)

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Tenure, Civil Rights Laws, Inclusive Contracts, and Fear: Legal Protection and the Lives of Self-Identified Lesbian, Gay Male, and Bisexual Public School Teachers

Thomas Patrick Juul

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Opening Remarks

I believe that great social research must be simple in the goals it tries to achieve. Those who create great, socially important studies have several things in common. Their work effects the lives of many people. These researchers, with their analytical and scientific skills, approach their subjects with a personal courage and passion which pulses through their work, giving it a heat, as blood gives warmth to our bodies. They are controversial. They challenge the commonly accepted, and yet, support the known self-evident. Their work reflects images of the society back upon itself, as a mirror would reflect one's face, encouraging introspection and examination of fundamental beliefs. They are courageous in revealing a reality to those who would rather not know it. Before beginning, I wish to briefly examine two such important studies that challenged the apparent norms of their day, to provide a more realist reality. The genesis of my work lies in their efforts.

Kenneth Clark's study using Caucasian and colored dolls provided him the data necessary to prove the damage done to the self-image of colored children by segregation and legalized discrimination. His social science research work became the first social research accepted before the United States Supreme Court. His use of dolls broke the back of the "separate but equal doctrine" and eventually led to the

desegregation of public schools. Social research can have important social consequences. His research has become a model for the effects that a dominant culture can have on minorities within that culture, specifically the children of minorities. While not the first to assert the need to raise the self-esteem of minority children, his work established a scientific and rational basis for such programs. The fundamental truths within his findings have been generalized in our culture to a variety of minority status groups, under the current rubric of cultural diversity. To all groups except one, children whose sexual orientation is or will become nonexclusively heterosexual. This may be because unlike children of color, children with special needs or abilities, girl-type children, or religious minority children, they cannot be easily identified. We know that these children, the non-heterosexuals, are having their self-esteem destroyed, are committing suicide and dropping out of school at three times the rate of other children, are being driven from their homes to live on the streets because of societal homophobia. And yet, as learned educators and academic leaders, we still refuse to struggle with the society or even to recognize the needs of these children in our schools, who will, with or without our blessing, become sexual minorities. Why? Because we are afraid of the public's homophobic reaction, and of course, to fight for gay rights is to raise

the question of your "real" sexual orientation and preferences!

Psychologist, Evelyn Hooker's published her work in 1957. She found queer men were not psychologically significantly different from normal heterosexual men. The implications of her work confronted the entire established understanding of homosexuality. Of course, she used a non-institutionalized population of homosexuals. Her work was based on knowing several queer men and finding them quite emotionally healthy and mentally stable. The results of her work eventually led to the declassification of homosexuality as a mental illness.

There appears to be a contradiction between Clark's theory of low-self-esteem childhoods and the healthy adults found in Hooker's work. Of course, this is not a contradiction, colored folk in the north and south, while living under the onus of their color, did, for the most part, grow into normal, healthy, and caring human beings. How is this possible? The answer is that these exploited people adjusted to their circumstances. They accepted the expected. For the most part, they knew their place, expectations, limitations, and restrictions. Some greater success came to those that were uppity. For many of Evelyn Hooker's men, they would end their self-inflicted pain in trying to find an acceptable identity by coming to the unfortunate conclusion that they were homosexual (general known as "queer" at the

time). They would have to remain limited in their job expectations, be subject to arrest any time, and of course, they would remain closeted in any public sense. For African Americans and other minority groups, the last forty years have seen the erasure of legalized discrimination. The question for me became: What happens when lesbian, gay male, and bisexual public school teachers no longer accept their assigned second class citizenship?

So I come to you today with mixed intentions. First to provide data and information from an ancillary analysis undertaken as part of my dissertation work, which is supplemented by comments taken from respondents in that survey, and from an analysis of a series of personal interviews held in the Spring of 1994. Secondly, I have to come to this small gathering of academics to deny and to refuse you the right of ignorance and academic indifference. To eliminate the possibility to say "I did not know." I want you to know that I am here with you today as a second class citizen, and like thousands, indeed, tens of thousands of my brothers and sisters, my career has been shattered by my insistence on speaking out and demanding equality. Yes, I am angry, and yes, I want you to hear that anger. That anger, mixed with the frustration of watching the destruction of our children and our lives, is the source of my passion. It is my

intention to add to your academic life by sharing the concerns of a generally silent population of your colleagues.

Theoretical Rationale and Intentions

The intention of this study was to examine the results of tenure and legal protection on lesbian, gay male, and bisexual public school teachers. These two sections of data have been taken from an original study on the effects of openness on the job satisfaction and job stress of lesbian, gay male, and bisexual public school teachers.

In recent years, lesbian and gay people have increasingly become the locus of researchers' interests. This increased interest has, in the last decade, included lesbian and/or gay male teachers (Delon, 1984; Harbeck, 1987, 1989, 1992; Juul, 1993; Mayer, 1992; Nickeson, 1980; Olson, 1987; Smith, 1985; Woods, 1990). The purpose in most of these studies has been to document the fact, and the impact of oppression and discrimination on gay teachers. And like the early studies of homosexuals, many of these studies compare homosexual teachers to heterosexual teachers. Generally, the comparison studies of teachers find little in the way of significant differences between heterosexual and homosexual teachers. No research, however, had been conducted with lesbian and gay male teachers as to the relationship of the openness of self-identified

lesbian, gay male, and bisexual public school teachers to job satisfaction and job stress at work. There was no research on the effects of tenure or civil rights protection on the openness and identity of gay teachers.

The purpose of the dissertation study was to improve and enrich our understanding of how the disclosure or non-disclosure of a lesbian, gay male, or bisexual teacher's sexual orientation at work influences his or her perceptions of job satisfaction and job stress. Consideration in the study was also given to the general level of job satisfaction and job stress among lesbian, gay male, and bisexual teachers as contrasted with previous studies using the same instrumentation with assumed heterosexual populations. Differences among the three Affectional Identity groups (lesbian, gay male, and bisexual) were examined concerning (1) job satisfaction, (2) job stress, and (3) identity-disclosure.

Supplementary analyses were undertaken to assess the effects of age, AIDS deaths, level of school, membership, and type of community on job satisfaction, job stress, identity, and demographic variables. Today's presentation is a brief discussion of an ancillary analysis of the effect tenure, state laws, inclusive contracts, and local ordinances had on the openness and public identities of gay teachers.

It was hypothesized that those teachers who lived in states where tenure existed and were tenured would be more

open about their sexual orientation. Similarly, it was felt that those teachers protected by state laws, local ordinances, and/or union contracts would be more open about their sexual orientation.

Weigert, Teitge, and Teitge (1986) provided a theoretical framework for the interaction of a lesbian or gay male persons self-identity with their social-identity. Gays and bisexuals engage in a struggle to balance their need for a personal identity, with those of an occupational group identity as a teacher that is assumed to be heterosexual. For gays and bisexuals the lack of congruency and integration with the heterosexual assumption creates dissonance. Seeking an occupational (social) identity may mean limiting gay or bisexual identity. By establishing a gay or bisexual (self) identity one may limit his social identity. Complete consonance for gay people within the heterosexual society may be difficult since public respectability is a component of social identity.

Method

One of the problems in gathering a sample of lesbian, gay male, and bisexual public school teachers was that circumstances demand that many of these teachers lead hidden lives. The researcher located and then contacted eighteen gay

and/or lesbian teacher organizations, asking for their help in distributing a survey of job satisfaction and job stress. In addition, several phone conversations were held with members of these organizations to answer questions related to privacy and the nature of the survey. All contact with survey participants was through participating organizations. Approximately fourteen hundred survey packets were distributed through thirteen of these gay and/or lesbian teacher organizations in April and May of 1992. Members of participating lesbian and gay teacher organizations were sent a packet that contained two copies of the survey instrument, a cover letter, and two return envelopes. The survey was snowballed by requesting the teacher who received the initial mailing to pass the second copy of the survey along to a known lesbian, gay male, or bisexual teacher who was not a member of a gay and/or lesbian teacher organization. Snowballing enlarged the sample size and provided a sampling group of gay teachers who were not associated with a gay and/or lesbian teacher organization. A follow-up post card was sent by the participating organizations to their members two weeks after the initial mailing. Dillman's (1978) procedures were followed regarding survey format, layout and size. Nine hundred and four usable surveys were returned before the cutoff date in July of 1992. The response rate based on membership was approximately 43.6% (611 of 1400) for members,

and 20.6% for non-members (289 of 1400). If the assumption is made that only those member teachers who responded gave a known colleague the second survey, the response rate for the snowball would be approximately 47.3% (289/611).

Measures

Three instruments were used in the survey. The Teacher Jobs Satisfaction Questionnaire (TJSQ, 66 items) was constructed by Paula E. Lester (1983). It was specifically designed for use with teachers. The instrument was factored by its author and was found to have nine factors. However, when the TJSQ was factored by the researcher a fourteen factor solution was found (alpha .937). The fourteen factors were found most appropriate for use with this sample. The second instrument was the Level of Professional Challenge Questionnaire (LPCQ, 32 items, alpha .839). The LPCQ was a modification of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI). The MBI was modified with 10 lesbian/gay teacher-specific stress questions. The researcher confirmed a four-factor solution. No instrument was found for the measurement of gay identity or openness. The researcher developed the Identity-Disclosure Questionnaire (IDQ, 33 items, alpha .885). A sample survey was constructed and administered (N=193) to a gay population.

The final instrument was factored and a six-factor solution was used.

Demographic data was also collected. Included in the demographic data was a question asking if the teacher was tenured. Also included in the demographic data section was a question that stated "Are your civil rights (as a gay teacher) protected by: (A) State Law, (B) Local Ordinance, (C) Union Contract. Teachers were provided three options for a response, (1) Yes, (2) No, and (3) I Do Not Know." These two questions were used in this analysis.

Openness Variables

Openness was a conceptual variable that required the creation of operational variables. Two operational variables, Teacher Openness (Topen) and Administrative Openness (Admopen) were constructed from the data. The third openness operational variable used the data from question 21 of the Identity Disclosure Questionnaire (IDQ21) directly. Item 21 from the Identity-Disclosure Questionnaire was also used to formulate the variable Teacher Openness (Topen). Item #21 asked teachers to respond to the statement, "I am out at work."

Using IDQ21, Topen reorganized the responses into three groups, (1) Strongly agree and agree into open, (2) Strongly disagree and disagree into not open, and (3) neutrals. Topen was considered a subjective evaluation of openness.

The operational Admopen variable used the relationships section of the Demographic Data Survey. Teachers were asked to objectively evaluate whether their orientation was known by their immediate supervisor and employer, and how it became known. The mean of the response(s) was used to create the variable Administrative Openness (Admopen). Three groups were formed. Means between 1.0 and 2.99 were labeled (1) open, means between 3.01 and 6.0 were the (2) not open group, and means of 3.0 composed the (3) neutral group. Table 1 is a cross tabulation of the two operational openness variables.

There was a noticeable shift in populations then using the two variables. When teachers were asked to rate their openness at work subjectively (Topen), they reported 281 were open, 188 rated themselves neutral, and 404 were not open. Using openness to administrators (Admopen), the results indicated that only 221 were open, 94 were neutral and 558 were not open. The shift from Topen neutrals to Admopen not opens was dramatic. Obviously many teachers considered themselves open without direct administrative knowledge. Some of this shift may be the result of averaging responses from large school districts where the district office is detached.

Table 1

Cross Tabulation of Variables, Teacher Openness (Topen) with Administrative Openness (Admopen)

Admopen Topen	Not Open	Neutral	Open	Total Percent
Not Open	372	17	15	404 46.3
Neutral	127	27	34	188 21.5
Open	59	50	172	281 32.4
Total Percent	558 63.9	94 10.8	221 25.3	873 100.0

Results

Tenure

Tenure protects teachers from arbitrary firings. Lesbian, gay male, and bisexual teachers repeatedly expressed their concerns about being fired if their sexual orientation was known. Tenure provides a more immediate and known protection than other sources of legal protection; not all states have tenure for teachers.

A t-test analysis was conducted to determine if tenured and non-tenured teachers showed significant differences in factor scores. Tenure was a powerful influence on TJSQ and LPCQ factor scores (see Table 2). The group mean differences

were significant on 10 of the 14 TJSQ and 3 of the 4 LPCQ factors.

Tenured teachers were less satisfied with their teaching jobs than non-tenured teachers on most TJSQ factors. Untenured teachers exhibited "youthful" enthusiasm in their creativity, need and acceptance of recognition, enjoyment of students, working conditions, and teaching as a profession. Untenured teachers sensed a need for Professional Development, and saw education as profession in which one could seek advancement. As one would expect, tenured teachers were more secure in their jobs. Tenured teachers evidenced more satisfaction than non-tenured teachers with their Pay. Relationships with Colleague showed no significant difference between the groups. This was somewhat surprising, since one might expect senior teachers to have developed stronger and more meaningful relationships over time; however, for gay teachers deception and isolation may account for a lack of meaningful long term relationships with colleagues. School and Administrative policy factors also showed no difference between the groups. Both groups felt equally committed to their personal responsibilities as teachers.

On the LPCQ, tenured teachers' scores exhibited more Emotional Exhaustion, and a significantly lessened sense of

Table 2

Teacher Job Satisfaction and Level of Professional Challenge Factors by Tenured and Non-Tenured: 1) Tenured, 2) Non-Tenured

Factors TJSQ	Gp	Mean	T-Value	Prob.
Supervision	1	44.32	-2.06	.039
	2	45.87		
Colleagues	1	30.08	-.85	.397
	2	30.36		
Pay	1	20.77	4.20	.000
	2	18.98		
Advancement	1	14.77	-4.04	.000
	2	15.98		
Wk conditions	1	16.21	-2.05	.041
	2	16.74		
Students	1	16.34	-4.20	.000
	2	16.96		
Prof.devel.	1	9.55	-4.59	.000
	2	10.33		
Creativity	1	16.76	-2.27	.023
	2	17.16		
Recognition	1	13.26	-2.48	.013
	2	13.85		
Security	1	11.43	7.01	.000
	2	10.10		
School policy	1	8.51	1.11	.267
	2	8.41		
Teaching	1	13.15	-3.48	.001
	2	13.58		

Table 2

Teacher Job Satisfaction and Level of Professional Challenge Factors by Tenured and Non-Tenured: 1) Tenured, 2) Non-Tenured

Factors TJSQ	Gp	Mean	T-Value	Prob.
Admin. policy	1	5.83	-.53	.598
	2	5.9		
Per. respon.	1	12.63	-.48	.628
	2	12.69		
Factors LPCQ				
Emotional Exhaustion	1	24.67	2.30	.022
	2	22.78		
Identity dissonance	1	24.95	-2.16	.032
	2	27.22		
Personal accomp.	1	39.33	-2.76	.006
	2	40.55		
Depersonal-ization	1	7.32	.79	.433
	2	7.01		

Note: Personal Accomplishment reverse scored.

Personal Accomplishment than non-tenured teachers. There were no significant differences on Depersonalization of students. Depersonalization was evidently not related to exhaustion or accomplishment when tenure was considered. However, tenured teachers did experience significantly less Identity Dissonance than non-tenured teachers.

Tenure is an important event for teachers, it should

provide job security. For gay teachers, tenure appears to have a greater influence in allowing teachers the freedom to be less satisfied and more burned out.

Tenured teachers were seven years older on average than non-tenured teachers (43.23 years vs. 36.14 years)(some states do not have tenure). Non-tenured teachers had approximately 8.5 years teaching experience, whereas tenured teachers averaged 18 years experience. Tenured teachers had roughly three times more time than non-tenured teachers in their present schools (10.43 years vs. 3.95 years). Increases in various age related variables have been shown to negatively affect teacher job satisfaction and to increase teacher burnout. When the effects of age, years in teaching, and years in schools are considered, the results of the t-test using tenured and non-tenured teachers on job satisfaction and teacher burnout were expected.

Only the Exposure factor on the IDQ had significantly different means (see Table 3). Surprisingly, non-tenured teachers had a higher score than tenured teachers, suggesting that they were more willing to reveal their sexual orientation than tenured teachers. Equally surprising was the lack of a significant difference on the Going Public factor. Non-tenured teachers had a slightly higher public image than tenured teachers. This may be related to age differences. Younger teachers may be more open about their sexual

Table 3

Identity Disclosure by Tenure:
1) Tenured, 2) Non-tenured

Factor	Gp	Mean	T-value	Prob.
Going public	1	27.00	-.08	.935
	2	27.05		
Integration	1	21.43	-1.75	.081
	2	21.98		
Exposure	1	16.05	-2.55	.011
	2	16.65		
Separatism	1	12.30	.61	.543
	2	12.17		
Commitment	1	13.23	-1.41	.160
	2	13.44		
Acceptance	1	17.40	-.78	.433
	2	17.54		
IDQTOT	1	117.12	-1.28	.200
	2	118.65		

Note: IDQTOT, Identity Disclosure Questionnaire total

orientation. The results of the T-test using the IDQ factors also showed a general trend to lower scores for tenured teachers, although there was no significant difference on the factors or total score. The results are startling in that non-tenured teachers exhibited more job satisfaction, less stress, and a higher public profile than tenured teachers. These results are consistent with the more open and less

closet-bound, self-acceptance of younger gays, and apparently younger lesbian and gay male teachers.

These comments may not apply to bisexual teachers, who are more likely to be tenured and less accepted. Bisexuals tend to feel excluded by both heterosexual and homosexual communities. Only recently has a independent identity movement begun by bisexuals.

There were few significant differences across demographic and relationship variables. As previously mentioned the chronological variables of age, years of teaching experience, and years in present school all showed significant mean differences. Tenured teachers in the sample tended more often to be male. On the attitude questions, non-tenured teachers were significantly more likely to encourage gay students to enter teaching, and to choose teaching as a profession. Tenured teachers were less open with both their parents and their brother than non-tenured teachers. The sister variable showed no differences in mean scores. There were no significant differences between groups on being open with their immediate supervisor or employer; non-tenured teachers, however, were less open with their employer than tenured teachers. Non-tenured teachers were slightly more open with their immediate supervisors than tenured teachers. The willingness of younger teachers to disclose themselves to their immediate supervisors and cloak their sexual identity from the employers may represent an emerging alternate strategy among young gay

teachers. This strategy appears to meet a younger, more self-accepting gay teacher's need for job security and job satisfaction. This strategy contrasts with older teachers use of the closet and limiting disclosure even after being tenured.

Tenure and Openness - Correlation

The effect of tenure on job satisfaction and job related stress and burnout was broad in scope. However, the results conflicted with the openness results, for example, males were more likely to be open and more likely to be tenured. Tenured teachers were less likely to be satisfied. The results of a Pearson product-moment correlation between the openness variables and tenure indicated that tenure was not related to openness, but that tenure is independent of openness (see Table 4). The magnitude of the results is not significant. It was assumed that tenure protection frees teachers to come out and be more open; these results do not support this belief.

Table 4

Correlation between Openness Variables and Tenure

Variable	Tenure	Topen	Admopen	IDQ21
Tenure		-.007	.007	.004
Topen			.642**	.944**
Admopen				.648**

Note: ** Sig. Less than or Equal to .01

Civil Rights Protection

Respondents were asked if their civil rights as gay teachers were protected by state law, local ordinances, or teacher's contract. Teachers were given three response options; these were (1) yes, (2) no, or (3) I do not know. Six states had laws protecting a teacher's rights based on sexual orientation when this study was conducted. These states were Connecticut, Hawaii, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Vermont, and Wisconsin. Several respondents claimed state civil rights protection where it did not exist. These flawed claims of protection were most notable in responses from California where a statewide gay civil rights bill was vetoed by Governor Pete Wilson during the school year (1991-1992) this survey was taken. The veto sparked several days of angry protests that made national news coverage (Note: Since then California has passed an anti-discrimination law related to employment only, 1993).

Table 5 provides a visual reference to the three civil rights protection questions. There were no significant differences between groups based on gender or Affectional Identities regarding state protection of a gay teacher's civil rights. There were significant differences when teachers were asked about protection afforded by local ordinances and contractual agreements. It is interesting to note that

Table 5

Analysis of Civil Rights Protection by State, Local Ordinance, and Contract by Gender and Affectional Identity

Gender and Affectional Identity	State protection	Local ordinance[1]	Teacher's contract[2]
Women	1.87	2.05[a]	2.02[b]
Lesbians	1.87	2.03[c]	2.00[d]
Bisexuals	1.94	2.22[c]	2.09[d]
Gay males	1.86	1.88[c]	1.81[d]
Men	1.87	1.89[a]	1.81[b]

Analysis of Variance by Gender

[a] T= 3.49 Sig. .001 [b] T= 4.36 Sig. .000

Analysis of Variance by Affectional Identity

[c] F=9.15 Sig. .0001 [d] F=9.62 Sig. .0001

Pairs of groups significantly different @ .05

[1] Gay Males & Lesbians; Gay Males & Bisexuals
[2] Gay Males & Lesbians; Gay Males & Bisexuals

bisexuals registered higher, or more negative response scores than either lesbians or gay males on all three questions. This may be a function of a higher rate of uncertainty about their rights. Gay males were more certain of their civil rights in all areas. A higher percent of gay men claimed protection by ordinance and contract than either lesbians or bisexuals. There were only slight differences between groups claiming state protection (see Appendix Tables 7, 8, and 9 for cross tabulation of civil rights protection by

Affectional Identity). There is no reason to believe that there should be any significant differences between groups. Therefore, the differences may be the result of not knowing ones rights. This deduction is supported by the data. The uncertainty exhibited by all three groups when it came to knowing if their civil rights were protected in their own teacher contracts was startling. "I don't know" was the response of 22.0% of the sample. More specifically, 23.7% for lesbians, 35.2% for bisexuals, and 17.5 % of gay males were uncertain about their civil rights. Further analysis of differences based on state, local ordinance, and union contract protection were abandoned in light of the large number of uncertain responses and examination of sub-sample sizes.

Conclusions and Discussion

The data indicated that tenure had a strong negative influence on issues related to job satisfaction. The data suggested that non-tenured teachers are more likely to enjoy teaching. Tenured teachers were more satisfied with pay and job security. Since senior teachers have tenure and are more job secure, and most teachers receive salary increases based on length of service, neither of these exceptions appear unusual nor unexpected. Non-tenured teachers were

significantly more satisfied with; Supervision, Advancement, Working Conditions, Students, Professional Development, Creativity, Recognition, and with Teaching Itself.

Tenured teachers showed greater Emotional Exhaustion and a significantly lessened sense of Personal Accomplishment. They experienced significantly less Identity Dissonance at school than non-tenured teachers. Since, Identity Dissonance reflected gay identity related stress at work, it would appear that tenured teachers develop strategies for survival, which in light of the correlation between openness and tenure, does not include greater openness. There were no significant differences between teacher groups in Depersonalization.

The Identity and Disclosure Questionnaire indicated that tenured teachers were remarkably similar to non-tenured teachers in overall scores. Non-tenured teachers were significantly more willing to risk exposure than tenured teachers. And, non-tenured teachers were significantly more likely to be open with their immediate supervisors. Younger teachers appeared less willing to remain closeted.

There was no correlation between the tenure status of the respondents and any of the three openness variables. Tenure does not appear to provide protection or an avenue to openness for lesbian, gay male, and bisexual public school teachers.

Men were significantly more likely to claim local and contract rights then women. Gay males were significantly more

likely to claim local and contract protection then lesbians, and bisexuals. Large segments of the three Affectional Identity groups showed a lack of knowledge about civil rights protection.

The data raised two fundamental questions in the mind of the researcher: (1) Why was it that tenure did not provide a shield as expected and increase the openness of teachers?, and (2) Why were lesbian, gay male, and bisexual teachers so uninformed about their rights? The researcher believes there is a single answer or solution to both questions. The answer is that gay teacher fear the consequences of coming out at work. Karen Harbeck, Ph.D., attorney, educator, and noted (Lesbian) author writes in James Sears' Bound by Diversity,

> But after 17 years of giving our community, and those who would harm us, this message of our strength, our courage, and our entitlements, I must share a side of my life that I hesitate to expose even to my closest friends. For all of this time I have been trying to be positive about the coming out process. If we believe the press, our social institutions, our places of employment, our friends, and our selves, the world is a pretty scary place - and coming out is pretty dangerous. p. 239

She goes on to say,

> My life has been hard, and sometimes impossible, because at pivotal points I have chosen to come out... Teaching is my passion. I have four graduate degrees, and I am a good teacher. I would like to tell you that I am gainfully employed at a local college or university that appreciates my efforts, but the truth is that I do not have much of a teaching job..." (p. 241)

This researcher initially sought solutions for these questions in a series of eleven personal interviews. These

interviews were held in the Spring of 1994 in the San Francisco Bay area. The interviewed teachers were drawn from a pool of those who requested survey summaries. All came from the San Francisco Bay area. Thirty-five teachers were sent a letter requesting personal interviews. One third were returned as no longer being at the original mailing address, suggesting high mobility among these teachers. None of the teachers were employed by the City of San Francisco Public Schools. Six lesbians and five gay males were interviewed; no bisexuals were interviewed. Two of the lesbians lived together and taught in an area Catholic High School. The seven public school teachers were employed by suburban communities within eighty miles of the city. All seven were tenured and for the most part nested (ie., their position could not be eliminated by excessing staff) in their positions. The other four teachers worked for non-public schools.

While the interviews cover a variety of topics related to questions raised from the original dissertation data, a significant segment of time in each interview dealt with the questions concerning tenure and civil rights protection. It should be noted that California had passed an employment rights act between the initial survey (Spring, 1992) and the interviews (Spring, 1994). Two of the teachers did not know

that the employment rights act had been passed, one had assumed it had passed the year it was vetoed by the governor.

None of the public school teachers were explicitly out in their schools or school districts. One male was considering coming out, as was a lesbian teacher. However, the other five were not. Two males explicitly denied any benefit to coming or being out, both teachers were visibly effeminate. Two of the four non-public school teachers were out. All four non-public school teachers were lesbians. One worked for a state run coastal college and the other worked in a Berkeley early childhood center (pre-K to third grade). This women worked with her significant other in the same school and was encouraged to be somewhat open with her lover. There had been no complaints from parents and the children accepted their togetherness without question. She stated during the interview that the young children in the school knew that they loved each other and that loving each other meant wanting to be with each other all the time. Most of the public school teachers had been with their school districts, and often in the same school building, for many years.

When questioned about why they were not out at school, all responded in a similar way. They all believed that administrators would find a way to get even with them if they came out in any public way. With one exception, they further believed that parents would raise such an outcry that they

would lose their job or be the targets of parental or student violence.

When questioned specifically about their tenure protection, there was a consensus that some way would be found to force them from their positions. When questioned about the new state law protecting them against discrimination in the work place, all agreed that in the "real" world it provided little protection in light of public attitudes. Four of the teachers cited cases where tenured gay teachers had been given very bad assignments or forced to resign. In one case, a teacher cited a situation where the principal in her high school had placed a known lesbian in an all male special education class and allowed the teacher's sexual orientation to be divulged to the students. The situation became so difficult and physically threatening that she resigned. Several alluded to the need for law suits against school districts before they believed the law could be used to effectively protect gay teachers. These teachers said that there is little need to know about protection when the outside world is perceived as extremely hostile and homophobic. There was some varied opinion on how much support they would get from their unions and other teachers if their sexual orientation was made public; the prevailing view was that they would be isolated socially and professionally.

The researcher then began a review of the comments made in the original survey booklets. Over three hundred of the surveys contained extended comments and personal views. Many of the surveys show that lesbian and gay male teachers want to be role models for children. Role models not just for gay youth, but models of diversity for all children. However, fear of retaliation and job loss was mentioned in many responses. This included teachers with long careers in states where sexual orientation was protected by state laws. For example, a 42 year old lesbian, who has been teaching for 17 years in Wisconsin (a free state) wrote,

> About 5 years ago when I was out in the lesbian community but not out to most people at school, some of my students (6th graders) "figured out" that I was a lesbian. They vandalized our home, passed notes in class and some felt they could treat me disrespectfully because I was a lesbian. At that time I lived and taught in the same neighborhood.... I continue to live in that neighborhood but I changed to another city school within the same district. Neither the principal or our union were very supportive. We started our own support group for gay teachers since then and have begun to get some union support. Our district (by state law) has to support us but they do very little.

A 42 year old Wisconsin man who has been a teacher for 25 years and who has been in the same school for 20 years wrote,

> I would love to be more visible as I think it is important to have gay role models. I am however realistic enough to realize I cannot shout my sexual orientation from the roof tops in a small town.

After 16 years in the same middle school an Iowa math teacher writes,

> I feel cheated as a person and as a teacher because of the homophobic attitudes in this society. I am sure I would be a happier, freer person, and therefore a better teacher, if I were able to lead an open life. Having to constantly put my love and commitment to education before my personal life and emotional wholeness has had to have taken its toll on my personality. Although I have had all kinds of honors and offices, I know I could be better. I have been president of 18 different organizations, including two state organizations. Have my doctorate all but my dissertation & am stalled... Many times I have wanted to go for counseling but feel I cannot deal with a stranger or someone in this community who might leak info. I am currently considering someone 95 miles away.

These are not the worse of the stories, rather they represent the middle ground. Several teachers reported physical assaults, while many teachers reported verbal abuse. A Georgia teacher reported having to move her teenage daughter to live with an aunt because the teenager could not take the taunting at school when her mother's sexual orientation became known. Several teachers included comments dealing with having to take or defend themselves from legal actions. One teacher from a free state, explained how he had been fired because he had been entrapped for solicitation in a neighboring state and the charge used to dismiss him in his home state. Several teachers made it clear that they would be leaving teaching altogether.

Not all the comments were negative; however, most made it clear that administrators, parents, and relationships with students are sources of potential danger. Those teachers who said they were open generally remarked about improved lives,

more productive teaching, and better relations with students and colleagues, as well as, feeling better about themselves. However, fear of reprisals, especially from parents or parent groups, remained a concern to many.

Many of the respondents from Colorado remarked about a fundamentalist group which demanded the names of all unmarried teachers in the Colorado Springs School District. They were also concerned that those who had been open or were known, would lose their jobs, once an anti-gay state constitutional amendment passed. The dilemma in fighting the anti-gay amendment openly and taking the consequences if it passed was a common theme. Many teachers admitted being intimidated.

A 40 year old special education teacher from Wisconsin writes,

> I had another job in the same school system which I lost due to not being out. The administration discovered it after I was forced into a situation of having to report another teacher on sexual abuse of a student. (By law I was required to report.) The case could not go to court since the student refused to testify after reporting to me. Therefore, the administration (king) killed the messenger. I withstood the harassment from many teachers without support from administration within the building. I finally moved on when other teachers harassed my special ed. students since they couldn't "get" me. I'm not sure how or if this brief description of a hellish semester is helpful. I know how clearly it became to me to never be in the closet at work again. It was so easy for people to use it against me when they thought it could hurt. I'm proud of what I did and proud of who I am. No more hiding.

This teacher represents the many, who came through the doubt and fears to feel whole and complete.

What is the cost to education from homophobia? One Long Island, New York teacher sent the following letter of recommendation he received after being RIFed (Reduction In Force, excessed).

> It is with pleasure that I introduce .... He has been one of the most motivating forces in our High School and we, as a faculty, are reluctant to see him leave. Because of budget cuts, we are losing one of the most dynamic motivators in our school district. His presentations have stimulated our student body to call the library the "hub" of the school. Students would rather spend time on the up-to-date equipment that (he) has brought to our district, read the latest periodicals, or work on research than any other extra-curricular activity offered.

He believes the RIF was due to four years of serious conflict with the administration over discussions about inclusion of a Lesbian and Gay People of Color bulletin board in an African American High School that openly sought to improve the self-esteem of all its students (<u>not</u>). This harassment including being brought up on tenure charges for racism.

The cost to our schools and children is clear. Homophobia drives many qualified and highly talented teachers away from the profession. Those that stay are restricted and must constantly be attentive to the prospect of exposure with all its consequences.

In studying what many may consider an extreme group, lesbian, gay male, and bisexual teachers, wider implications may be drawn that include all teachers. Any teacher, straight or gay, who holds and expresses views that are not popular or

consistent with administrative or community views may experience this sense of fear and isolation. As we become a more conservative nation, the chill from conformity threatens the diversity of ideologies that is at the heart of inquiry. The fear of open discussion may become a threat to anyone's career. We as educators must acknowledge, endorse, and speak openly to insure that our public schools are laboratories for ideas and are not just used for pedagogical experimentation. If we are moving to a global world then we as educators must stand against xenophobia in all its forms.

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Table 6

Returned Surveys by State by Affectional Identity

State	Lesbian	Gay male	Bi-sexual	Total
Alabama	3	1		4
Arizona	6	2		8
Arkansas	2	1		3
California	68	81	12	161
Colorado	50	24	9	83
Connecticut	5	8	1	14
Delaware		2		2
D.C.	1	1		2
Florida	4	7	1	12
Georgia		3	1	4
Hawaii		2	1	3
Illinois	21	8	2	31
Indiana	17	4	1	22
Iowa	4		2	6
Kansas		2		2
Kentucky	2		1	3
Maine	2	2	2	6
Maryland	2	2		4
Massachusetts	22	9	4	35
Michigan	25	40	5	70
Minnesota	9	2		11
Mississippi	2			2
Missouri	5	5		10
Montana		1		1
Nebraska	8	2	1	11
New Hampshire	1	1	1	3

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Table 6

Returned Surveys by State by Affectional Identity

State	Lesbian	Gay male	Bi-sexual	Total
New Jersey	31	27	2	60
New Mexico	3			3
New York	30	48	2	80
Ohio	23	38	5	66
Oklahoma		1		1
Oregon	1	3	1	5
Pennsylvania	1	11		12
Rhode Island	1			1
South Carolina	1			1
Tennessee	2			2
Texas	15	10	4	29
Vermont	3			3
Virginia		2		2
Washington	12	2		14
West Virginia		1	1	2
Wisconsin	56	23	11	90
Foreign	1	6	1	8
Total	439	382	71	892

Table 7

Cross Tabulation: Gay Teacher's Civil Rights Protection based on State Laws By Affectional Identity

Affect Identity		Pro-tected	Not Pro-tected	Don't Know	Totals
Lesbians	N	138	212	81	431
	% Row	31.4	48.3	18.5	48.3
	% Col	48.4	50.2	47.4	
	% Tot	15.5	23.8	9.1	
Bisexuals	N	24	25	20	69
	% Row	33.8	35.2	28.2	7.8
	% Col	8.4	5.9	11.7	
	% Tot	2.7	2.8	2.2	
Gay males	N	123	185	70	378
	% Row	32.2	48.4	18.3	42.4
	% Col	43.2	43.8	40.9	
	% Tot	13.8	20.7	7.8	
Totals		285	422	171	878
		32.0	47.3	19.2	98.4

Note: Missing n=14 (1.8%)

Table 8

Cross Tabulation: Gay Teacher's Civil Rights Protection Based on Local Ordinances By Affectional Identity

Affect. Identity		Protected	Not protected	Don't know	Totals
Lesbians	N	88	239	101	428
	% Row	20.0	54.4	23.0	48.0
	% Col	40.9	52.4	50.8	
	% Tot	9.9	26.8	11.3	
Bisexuals	N	11	32	26	69
	% Row	15.5	45.1	36.3	7.8
	% Col	5.1	7.0	13.1	
	% Tot	1.2	3.6	2.9	
Gay males	N	116	185	72	371
	% Row	30.4	48.4	18.8	41.8
	% Col	54.0	40.6	36.2	
	% Tot	13.0	20.7	8.1	
Totals		215 24.1	456 51.1	199 22.3	870 97.5

Note: Missing n=22 (2.5%)

Table 9

Cross Tabulation: Gay Teacher's Civil Rights Protection Based on Teacher's Contract by Affectional Identity

Affect. Identity		Pro-tected	Not pro-tected	Don't know	Totals
Lesbians	N	102	227	104	433
	% Row	23.2	51.7	23.7	48.5
	% Col	39.2	54.2	53.1	
	% Tot	11.4	25.4	11.7	
Bisexuals	N	19	25	25	69
	% Row	26.8	35.2	35.2	7.8
	% Col	7.3	6.0	12.8	
	% Tot	2.1	2.8	2.8	
Gay males	N	139	167	67	373
	% Row	36.4	43.7	17.5	41.8
	% Col	53.5	39.9	34.2	
	% Tot	15.6	18.7	7.5	
Totals		260 29.1	419 47.0	196 22.0	875 98.1

Note: Missing = 17 (1.9%)

Appendix

Comment-Stories

This appendix contains 27 selections which provide a broader representation of the nearly four hundred responses found in the returned surveys. The term "Rating" refers to responses to the IDQ21 question (I am out at Work.): (1) Strongly Disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Neutral, (4) Agree, and (5) Strongly Agree. These ratings are provided to the reader so they can have some indication of the respondents subjective openness (1 closeted, 2 not open 3 neutral, 4 open 5 very open). Generally comments have not been edited.

Case # 353.

Subject: male, 43 years old.
Teaching: 20 years, 1 at this school.
Position: high school, counselor
Community: suburban, New York.
Rating: 5

Comments:

When I first began teaching, I believed the "gay" & "teacher" didn't belong in the same sentence, let alone the same classroom. An early experience that involved gay liberation speakers who were invited to speak to my social studies classes provided a significant lesson. The reaction of the school community was so homophobic & irrational that I was initially reprimanded (for, among other things, creating a fire hazard because 300 students jammed a stairwell trying to get <u>into</u> my classroom). Later I learned that nearly all the complaints came from the parents of students who did <u>not</u> hear the speakers. With no direct experience, those students when home and reported their fantasies (they were kissing at the drinking fountain, picking up kids in the bathrooms, etc.) Visibility had made a big difference on how people reacted. That was 1972. Ever since, I edged more and more towards being that visible presence. Today, I sit on the Rochester City Council as our (city's and our state's) first openly - gay elected official. My student, their parents & my colleagues <u>all</u> know. After 20 years in one school building another of the

3 high school in my suburban district recruited me to transfer.

I have always been a closet parent, as such I will always be a teacher, and educator. Today, I run parenting classes as one of the new efforts I've initiated in my school counselor role. In a system a counselor inherits a class and travel with them until they graduate. I've taken 2 classes completely through and an now starting my third. Prior to that I taught social studies for 10 years.

I have experienced discrimination in my job (didn't get counseling jobs when I first applied) but by & large I consider myself fortunate to have my position and the respect of other school personnel.

Case # 892.

Subject: female, 33 years old.
Teaching: 8 years, 1 at this school.
Position: elementary, school counselor
Community: urban, New York.
Rating: 3

Comments:

I work in 2 school sites - 1. the principal reminds us as educators to be aware of different lifestyles & not assume all parents are a mon & dad. 2. the first day of work the faculty made fun of coming out day & were so prejudiced & mean in their statements about gay (they didn't know I was gay & their comments were not directed at me) I never ate in or went to the faculty room all year.

I attempted to answer your questions by averaging the affect from both sites.

I have been fired twice for being gay - I fought the school once & was awarded a monetary settlement. The second time I was silenced by threats (on the schools part) to blackball me from other jobs in education if I sued them. I felt it was more important to keep teaching than to risk losing my livelihood.

Case # 002.

Subject: female, 49 years old.
Teaching: 22 years, 18 at this school.
Position: middle school, English/reading
Community: urban, New Jersey.
Rating: 5

Comments:

"Coming our" publicly added 95% of stress and disappointment on the job. I used to be more creative & happy about work. Even though I still have my job - and now a

position on the county Human Relations Commission, the name calling, abet small, has left a neutral-to-negative feeling about work. I hope things change. Good luck with the survey - Please send us one!

Comments in survey booklet
Since coming out - no L/G teaches talk to me that often. I have tenure here 18 years. TJSQ Q58 on school policies, very paranoid. Demographic data relationship section, "My children, however, do not want me to display affection to lover in front of grandchildren!"

Case # 135.

Subject: male, mixed race, 45 years old.
Teaching: 25 years, 26 at this school.
Position: elementary, art
Community: urban, New York.
Rating: 5

Comments:
Page 13 question 5 is too limited having lost 15 friends and in the process of losing 5 more has had a profound effect on my being out and teaching, however, none of those have died within the last year.

Case # 123.

Subject: female, 30 years old.
Teaching: pre-service
Position: elementary, elementary classroom
Community: rural, Massachusetts.
Rating: 4

Comments:
As a pre-services teacher I'm very conscience as I interview for internships and potential employers of my lesbianism. I feel I have had to examine behaviors like dress, hair, etc. to appear more assimilated with the straight culture.

Case # 108.

Subject: male, 36 years old.
Teaching: 14 years, 3 at this school.
Position: elementary, elementary class
Community: suburban, Texas.
Rating: 1

Comments:
I wish I knew my rights or whether I had any. I want to be open, not loud. But professional.

Case # 561.

Subject: male, 52 years old.
Teaching: 23 years, 20 at this school.
Position: high school, foreign language
Community: urban, Wisconsin.
Rating: 1

Comments:

Even though sexual orientation is protected by law, it is too dangerous to be out at high school. Students are very intolerant and it would give problem students and their parents a very dangerous weapon to use against me in conflict situations. The general public is still not comfortable with homosexuals in teaching and camp counselor positions.

Case # 560.

Subject: female, 28 years old.
Teaching: 5 years, 5 at this school.
Position: high school, science
Community: suburban, Texas.
Rating: 1

Comments:

Teaching in the "Southern Bible Belt" is stifling both to me personally and to my students. I am not allowed to be whole person. My colleagues do not know/admit/discuss or have any evidence of my sexuality, yet, they ask no relationship questions at all. Thus, I don't have to lie directly but it is awkward. This situation is 100% not fair to my students. They need/deserve a good gay 'role model' - all of them - the ones who are facing homosexuality, and the heterosexuals so we can build a generation of people who are not prejudice. My student like me. I would love to tell them at the end of the year so that they would know that they know a gay person and so that they would know that homosexuality does not have a negative impact on a person. The problem with this fantasy of mine that the following students would not have the opportunity to get to know me as a person; they would view me as a homosexual and view me with whatever perceptions that word means to them that they already gained from their parents, peers and media.

You neglected to include questions about the everyday stress of going to the grocery store, movies, etc. with mate and wondering when someone will start making connections.

I wavier between needing to be closeted to keep my job or not giving a damn about being fired and living life. Thus, I tend to do the latter out of town because my students are everywhere.

Case # 569.

Subject: female, 33 years old.
Teaching: 12 years, 5 at this school.
Position: community college, Child Development Faculty & Director of Lab school
Community: urban, Texas.
Rating: 1

Comments:
I live in a large city, but still avoid com. (gay/lesbian) events where the media might be present. I work with very young children and feel parents would absolutely (on the whole) not trust me with their children.
If I lived in a small town, esp. near my relatives I'm sure I would be even more in the closet. I do go to the gay/lesbian bars and also work on a local lesbian newsletter/publication.

Case # 591.

Subject: male, 44 years old.
Teaching: 15 years, 15 at this school.
Position: elementary/middle school, special ed.
Community: rural, Wisconsin.
Rating: 4

Comments:
I would like to say that I do not make a big deal at work about my sexuality. There are people there that know and there are people there that may or may not know I am gay. If anyone asks I am honest. I have also had a child nine months ago with a lesbian teacher from the same school as I teach. People were very supportive - including administration and my supervisor. We discuss our baby at school - not our sexuality - because people don't bring it up.

Case # 592.

Subject: female, Asian, 36 years old.
Teaching: 14 years, 4 at this school.
Position: high school, special education
Community: urban, Wisconsin.
Rating: 1

Comments:
As of late I have received obscene phone calls from a high school male student. It was directed more at my lover, who does not live with me. Accusations & comments were made concerning our sexuality. Being a spec. ed. teacher I do not get a lot of exposure to mainstream kids so my life is fairly private. My lover gets much exposure being a high school math

teacher. I really resent my life being invaded like this. (My lover's phone # recently was made unlisted because of these calls.) Now they are using me to get at her. I have since made my number unlisted. This infuriates me that kids can violate our private lives for their kicks.

Being a gay school teacher is tough. The media & movies etc. are making gayness more public which is good. I doubt I will feel completely O.K. about it in my lifetime though.

Case # 328.

Subject: female, 52 years old.
Teaching: 29 years, 25 at this school.
Position: high school, English
Community: suburban, New Jersey.
Rating: 1

Comments:

It is frustrating to hide all the time. I have always had a good rapport with my students and wish I could be honest with them, especially those students that I know are gay. I want to share with them, talk to them and help those that I know are struggling with their sexuality because they are gay. I cannot, and this is painful.

Case # 677.

Subject: female, 48 years old.
Teaching: 15 years, 6 at this school.
Position: middle school, art
Community: urban, Ohio.
Rating: 2

Comments:

Although many teachers may guess that I'm lesbian, I would not come out to the hets. My principal likes me but she is vehement against gays/lesbians. I look forward to the day we can be out and honest without fear!

Case # 329.

Subject: male, 44 years old.
Teaching: 23 years, 23 at this school.
Position: elementary/middle school, classroom - curriculum
Community: suburban, New Jersey.
Rating: 3

Comments:

There are times when I wonder if this is the time the drooling homophobic parent rises form the swamp. But maybe once a year or 2 yrs.

I do not dwell on being a gay teacher. I am a fine human being who chooses to teach children & happens to be gay.

Case # 335.

Subject: female, 40 years old.
Teaching: 19 years, 11 at this school.
Position: Jr-Sr. High School, English
Community: rural, Massachusetts.
Rating: 2

Comments:
It was difficult to answer some of these questions adequately. I think that my having been married and having taught in this community for so many years has made me somewhat of an anomaly. While I don't hid the fact that I live with a women, I feel as thought most people in the community where I teach put the actual realization that I am a lesbian somewhere out of their conscientious - like they probably really do know, but don't acknowledge it. And since I'm not overt about anything & work hard at maintaining positive, caring relationships w/ students, both they and their parents leave my status "unspoken of" -
Some day, I feel there will be a problem with some student or parents w/ whom I don't have a good relationship, for whatever reasons. I feel vulnerable, but also feel that I've had good, positive relationships thus far.

Case # 350.

Subject: Female, 41 years old.
Teaching: 5 years, 5 at this school.
Position: elementary, Elementary class
Community: urban, Nebraska.
Rating: 2

Comments:
16 & 21 were difficult to because while I'm not "out" - I'm also not in & if someone asks I'll tell then - or if someone guesses & says nothing I won't worry - I'm not hiding. My partner is a visible part of my life down to her picture on my desk. I initiate & talk about gay issues as well as AIDS issues at school. If I were legally protected I'd be out in a second. My orientation helps me to have empathy for all oppression - because of this and my push we teach an equity class to all 3rd graders every year, all year. I always mention gay lesbian families if other are mentioned. -talk openly about g/l put downs & deal w/ them.
I feel my being in front of a classroom is important, even though I'm not "out" to students. They are seeing and hearing a very nontraditional view of the world 5 days a week. They are also hearing the g/l words spoken openly w/ respect

as just another way of life - other staff are also being exposed to different thoughts & ideas and I've seen attitudes change. Being officially out would be wonderful. The thought that helps me deal w/ the fear of being too out is that I am a good teacher but that is not my whole identity. If I'm fired - I'll do something else. I intend to push for legal protection next year in our contract thru my union. I feel that it is very important to teachers in front of the class room across grades who can openly say they are gay lesbian - the closest I can get is the pink triangle on my car & bicycle to being open about issues at large & being open about who I spend my time with. P.S. 4 other staff at my school of 35 staff are gay men. Were all out to each other to a few of the straight staff.

Case # 337.

Subject: male, 26 years old.
Teaching: 1 years, 1 at this school.
Position: elementary, special education long term sub.
Community: urban, Ohio.
Rating: 3

Comments:

I have a friend who is a guidance counselor at a Catholic High School. What perfect opportunity to be & be "role model!" He was my counselor (10 years ago) & the only reason I knew he was gay was that I went to a bar at 15 and he was there! What a great support system in high-school to have (2) teachers & a fellow student to talk, laugh, cruise, share with ... But it would be a shame to feel your job threatened if you were to be open with students - those who were questioning their own sexuality. Parents trust counselors to counsel - they can only do so from their own limited perspective. Ours includes "gay is ok". Parent need to respect diversity amongst educators.

I'd like to be able to be politically active once I gen "my own classroom" & become certified. I should have certificate & masters in Summer of '94. Good work - Thanks. PS - Do you know of current Federal Legislation that protects educators who choose to be "out" w/ fellow staff and/or students? I'll check locally for answers I know you're busy tabulating...

Comments from survey IDQ 28 present myself as being straight- Depends. At times, yes. There is such a thing as self preservation/ protection/ boundaries!! Relationships Employer - Principal/ probably clueless - I don't care if she know but haven't told her. I don't feel long term subs need to worry or get involved as much in building wide "politics". I do my thing - the kids are why I'm here.

Case # 716.

Subject: female, 32 years old.
Teaching: 2 years, 2 at this school.
Position: elementary, elementary classroom, science
Community: urban, Washington.
Rating: 4

Comments:

Having other gay teachers (4 men) in my building really has made a difference in my own openness. An older gay male teacher has really done a lot for creating an open atmosphere. I take my partner of 5 1/2 years to all the staff parties - and my co-workers know her on a first name basis.

I have never said I'm gay - to a parent or to the principal, but I feel that those who are progressive know already - parents have invited me & my partner (housemate - as I introduce her to them) to dinner. Beth's 5 x 7 photo is on my desk - my students know I live with a woman and have never teased about boyfriends etc., of course it is 1st grade.

Case # 717.

Subject: female, 42 years old.
Teaching: 8 years, 4 at this school.
Position: high school, math
Community: suburban, Colorado.
Rating: 1

Comments:

I feel strongly that teachers should be free to be out & I feel it is important for homosexual students to have openly gay teachers as positive role models.

However, Colorado presently has a measure which will be on the ballot in the fall which will legalize discrimination against gay (an amendment to the state constitution). If this amendment should unfortunately pass, all gay teachers & suspected gay teachers will be at risk of being fired & will have no claim of discrimination. This is a very scary place to be a gay teacher at this point in time. This creates a tremendous ambivalence for me: I feel a great need to be working actively to defeat this amendment, but to do so could jeopardize my family & job if the amendment should happen to pass. I really hate this!!!!

Comments from survey booklet; cover, I was raised in a strong fundamentalist home. I knew I was "different" but didn't correctly label myself as homosexual until I was 37 yrs. old. I married and lived a strictly heterosexual life until then. Now, I am strictly homosexual. IDQ #24 I was married and have two children - children remove the need to go out with men to appear straight. Tenure: Colorado did away with tenure.

Case # 741.

Subject: female, 42 years old.
Teaching: 20 years, 2 at this school.
Position: elementary, counselor
Community: rural, Colorado.
Rating: 2

Comments:
I have presently had my contract non-renewed due to speaking up on school safety issues & reporting our district for non-compliance w/ state & federally mandated ESL laws. (My male supervisor detests strong assertive (female symbol).
I am fearful that during the law suit - my former district will try to expose my sexuality - which will also expose 4-5 other gay teachers in that small school district - stay turned!! Thanks for doing the survey!

Case # 540.

Subject: female, 37 years old.
Teaching: 12 years, 1 at this school.
Position: high school, math
Community: suburban, Connecticut.
Rating: 2

Comments:
I taught for 7 years in a boarding school where I came out when interviewed and was out to my students. It made life <u>much</u> easier. I only recall two negative instances, and I still get wonderful "thank-you for being there" letters, from former students who have grown up and come-out. Mostly I was well liked and supported. The transition from totally open to closeted has been difficult.

Case # 1000.

Subject: female, 35 years old.
Teaching: 6 years, 2 at this school.
Position: elementary, elementary classroom
Community: suburban, California.
Rating: 1

Comments:
I really fear being harassed out of my job if I come out. Yet, I can't help but think I'd be happier, more relaxed, and a better teacher if I <u>were</u> out. It's a real quandary for me.
Before teaching I was very out in all areas of my life. That was definitely better for my pride & peace of mind and closeness to others. I have loved teaching enough to give all that up.... but for how much longer I don't know.... the stress is incredible.

Case # 823.

Subject: female, 29 years old.
Teaching: 4 years, 3 at this school.
Position: elementary, elementary classroom
Community: suburban, Illinois.
Rating: 4

Comments:

(Comments Edited) There are some feelings and stories I would like to convey about the effects of sexual orientation on teaching which I hope will help you to better understand the work life of a lesbian teacher.

The first item is a true story about an incident that took place in a suburb north of Chicago, Highland Park (I Think). A junior high school teacher, upon overhearing some of her female students talking about boys for the hundredth time, requested that they calm down. She then made a statement to the effect that at their age, an appropriate effort in human relationships would be to try to build solid friendships with girls.

One of the girls related the incident late to her mother. The mother interpreted the events as an effort on the teacher's part to recruit her daughter to lesbianism. After all, the teacher was unmarried, no longer a spring chicken, and a good friend with another woman who was a teacher in the same school.

This mother got the addresses and phone numbers of this teacher, the teacher's parents, her friend and her friend's ex-husband. She then did a mass mailing to *every address in Highland Park* with this information and an explanation that these lesbian teachers were a detriment to the children of Highland Park.

Media attention was, of course, turned to these teachers, their administrators and their board members. Thank goodness, the only comment form the board and administrators was that these two women were exemplary teachers and an asset to the district and this was all that they were concerned about.

This event happened approximately four years ago, when I began teaching. Because of this, I keep every post-it, greeting card, holiday card, student letter and parent letter that I receive with any positive comment on it. I worry that I may end up in court or in some other situation that would require that I defend myself against accusations to the effect that I corrupt or am harmful to the children I teach.

To me, that is one of the saddest and most infuriating concepts I have ever encountered. I am not a mediocre teacher. I am an excellent one. I do not merely have decent working relationships with students and their parents. I have warm, long term relationships. I am invited into homes and out to family gathering. To think that these people might turn against me because I am different in some way is

sickening, but a reality nonetheless. To think that I am afraid enough each and every day so that I am consciously collecting concrete pieces of evidence that show I have the approval of parents and their children is horrifying.

Case # 819.

Subject: female, 54 years old.
Teaching: 18 yrs., 18 at this school.
Position: K-12, health
Community: rural, New York.
Rating: 4

Comments:
Our recent union contract negotiations resulted in a new term "spouse-designee" indicating "an adult living in the home of the teacher in the role of spouse." Throughout the negotiations process my committee were all encouraging and willing to support this change. It felt great!

Case # 807.

Subject: female, 56 years old.
Teaching: 32 years, 5 at this school.
Position: elementary, library
Community: urban, Washington.
Rating: 1

Comments:
Teaching has provided a respected safe environment out of the male-dominated work place. The pay has been reasonably moderate, but not up to my educational level.

Leading a double life has been the hardest part. Always living with the fear of discovery & possible dismissal & shame.

It has also been, frustrating & unsettling to know I was as good or better as a teacher than the hetros I worked with & yet would face that majority rejection if they knew.

I am aware that I have also "held-back" with the students & not given them as much of my emotional self.

Actually considering all the lack of sharing & holding back of students and staff its' really a wonder that I'm the effective teacher I am. I'm looking forward to retiring in a couple of year & finally being free.

Case # 695.

Subject: female, 37 years old.
Teaching: 16 years, 3 at this school.
Position: high school, English
Community: urban, Michigan.
Rating: 1

Comments:

Two points:

1. I have a great concern in my large urban high school that if students knew me to be a lesbian, I would risk getting assaulted by young "gentlemen" eager to physically assert their manhood.

2. I decided many years ago that if a young student NEEDED the information that I (who am generally popular with the kids) am lesbian for his or her own personal well being, I would NOT withhold that information from that person. Last year a young woman came out to me. Several months later, when she was experiencing some trauma about being 15 1/2 and gay, I did come out to her. She felt very supported knowing that her favorite teacher was also gay and was settled down in a "normal" committed relationship complete with house and pets. I was scared even though I wouldn't expect this child to repeat the information. It is, unfortunately, a BIG risk to come out to <u>anyone</u> at work, even non-gay teachers with whom I work closely. Four people on my staff of 50-60 know who I am, and that I'm in a committed relationship.